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EXEMPTIONS: (b)(1)
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DATE: JUL 2001

Weekly Summary

~~Secret~~

No. 0029/74
19 July 1974

Copy № 57

108-228553

MEXICO: THE FIGUEROA CASE

The all-out hunt for guerrilla leader Lucio Cabanas has turned up nothing after three weeks. The search, involving about 2,000 army troops as well as units from the other two military services, was launched in an effort to kill Cabanas and rescue Senator Ruben Figueroa, the gubernatorial candidate kidnaped by Cabanas on May 30.

The government mounted the operation, concentrated in the high sierra northwest of Acapulco in Guerrero State, after receiving ransom demands from Cabanas that it termed "impossible" to meet. Government officials have expressed little hope the army will find Figueroa alive. Some army officials believe that Cabanas may have left the area during the nearly four-week period before troops were sent in. Also, an operation on this scale has never been tried before and the lack of adequate long-range communications is apparent. Bad weather and rugged terrain have further complicated the search. President Echeverria reportedly is considering posting the military units involved to Guerrero on a permanent basis, but financial constraints may not allow it.

Pressed by the Figueroa case to comment publicly on the country's guerrilla problem, Echeverria and other government spokesmen have fallen back on answers clouded by long-established Mexican "revolutionary" traditions and myths. Guerrillas are not working for revolutionary interests, Echeverria says, but are trying to provoke regressive tendencies. He claims that guerrilla terrorism "appears to be more the work of the right than of the left."

[redacted]

The government's inclination to dismiss a problem with slogans will not ease the situation, and sporadic violence is likely to continue for some time. For the immediate period, guerrillas may try to embarrass Echeverria while he is on his South American trip this month. This may have been the motive behind the bombings this week at both party and military headquarters in Guadalajara.

[redacted]